



# Plugging an Abandoned Water Well

Abandoned water wells pose serious safety hazards. An abandoned well is a direct pathway for contaminants to be introduced into an aquifer, a source of drinking water. Some wells are up to 36 inches in diameter and can cause a fatal accident if a person falls in. This last reason is best supported by the 1987 case of eighteen month old Baby Jessica who fell into a well with a diameter of only 8 inches in Midland, Texas. This is why abandoned water wells **have to be plugged!**

## What is “plugging” a well?

Plugging a well refers to:

- Removing all pumps and piping
- Filling the well with cement grout
- Cutting off the well at ground surface
- Filling the hole to make it level

In November of 1985, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD), Office of Public Works, Water Resources Section issued the publication titled “Water Well Rules, Regulations and Standards— State of Louisiana.” These regulations describe how water well contractors become licensed and how wells are registered. The regulations also describe the standards for drilling water wells and for plugging abandoned wells.

## When does a well have to be plugged?

- A well does **not** have to be plugged if it is on standby, or if it is inactive, but is maintained for future use.
- A well **has** to be plugged if it is **abandoned**. According to the regulations, a well is considered to be abandoned “if its use has been permanently discontinued; its pumping equipment has been permanently removed; the well is in such a state of disrepair that it cannot be used to supply water and/or has the potential for transmitting surface contaminants into an aquifer; the well poses potential health or safety hazards, or the well is in such a condition that it cannot be placed in the active, standby, or inactive status.”
- The well must be plugged within 90 days of the date of abandonment.

## How do you plug a well?

- The well must be plugged in accordance to the methods and standards of the regulations. Abandoned wells must be plugged by an LDOTD licensed water well contractor. However, a non-licensed person may plug a domestic water well at his/her own or leased property which served a single family house which is his/her permanent residence, or was used for watering livestock on his/her farm. This person must have the required knowledge and equipment to LDOTD’s satisfaction and must obtain approval from LDOTD prior to the beginning of the plugging operation.
- Plugging and abandonment forms must be submitted to LDOTD within 30 days after the plugging of the well.
- For a copy of the regulations, please contact the Water Resources Section of LDOTD at 225-274-4172 or visit the LDOTD website at <http://www.dotd.state.la.us>.

Abandoned water wells are hard to find, and very few records exist that identify their locations. If you know of the existence of an abandoned water well, please contact the Water Resources Section at the above number to report it. Help keep our community’s drinking water clean.

**“Protect Your Water One Drop At A Time”**